



**DOCUMENTARY  
AUSTRALIA**

# CASE STUDY

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## **GHOSTHUNTER**

**SOMETIMES THE MOST TERRIFYING  
GHOSTS ARE OUR OWN**



**HEALTH + WELL BEING**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Synopsis

A Western Sydney security guard and part-time ghost hunter, Jason King has spent two decades searching for his absent father. As a survivor of trauma, he seeks to reconcile his fractured memories and piece together his past. When his search converges with a police investigation, a family secret is exposed - Forcing him to confront a brutal past in order to claim his future



Watch online here:



## Key statistics + achievements

- Screened at International and Australian Film Festivals
- Multiple Nominations and Awards including Best Documentary Film broadcast on SBS Television and podcast commissioned by Audible
- Screened in Universities, Organisations and at Conferences
- Educational Screening Guide and Fact Sheets used at Universities
- Professional Development Modules used across Australia



HEALTH + WELL BEING

# CONTEXT



Many adult survivors of childhood trauma experience depression, anxiety, memory loss, low self-esteem, and ongoing and long-term effects into adulthood. This can impact on their education and can lead to isolation and longer-term consequences such as homelessness, suicide, mental health issues, crime, and drug and alcohol addiction. It is substantial public health issue with significant social impacts across welfare, justice, housing, employment and education sectors and is in urgent need of redress.

By conservative estimates, childhood trauma including abuse affects 5 million (1 in 4) Australian adults. Adults often experience social, psychological, educational, employment and relationship difficulties. Survivors are more likely to enter the criminal justice system, healthcare and welfare systems, attempt or complete suicide and/or face debilitating challenges including self-harm, substance misuse etc. These impacts have not only a significant cost to the individual, but also to families and communities.

Ghosthunter brings to light the impact and often ongoing complex issues associated with childhood trauma including mental health issues, homelessness, relationship problems, and family violence. It also depicts the journey to recovery and healing, and highlights the resilience and resourcefulness of survivors. The film is a powerful case study for professionals working in the sector who are providing trauma-informed training, education, and public awareness.

Working closely with our key partner, Blue Knot Foundation and supported by our other partners, we used the film as the key tool to raise awareness, build capacity for services, and provide trauma-informed training across the sector.

Social:



Resources:



Childhood trauma affects 5 million or

**1/4**

Australian adults

There is an

**Urgent**

Need for trauma-informed training across sectors

**23yrs**

The average length of time of a survivor to disclose

**\$24b**

The annual budgetary cost of unresolved trauma

**“Jason presents as an adult survivor but he also is carrying the burden of his father’s crimes and he has committed violent acts. Jason is a client in health services that we’ve all had to deal with and his story is an excellent one to show the need to treat the whole person.”**

**- Donna Ruese, ECAV**

# REACH



1.4  
Million

Social media



11k

Website  
visitors



331 Resource  
downloads



12 Festivals



30+ Screenings



32k

Trailer views



150k

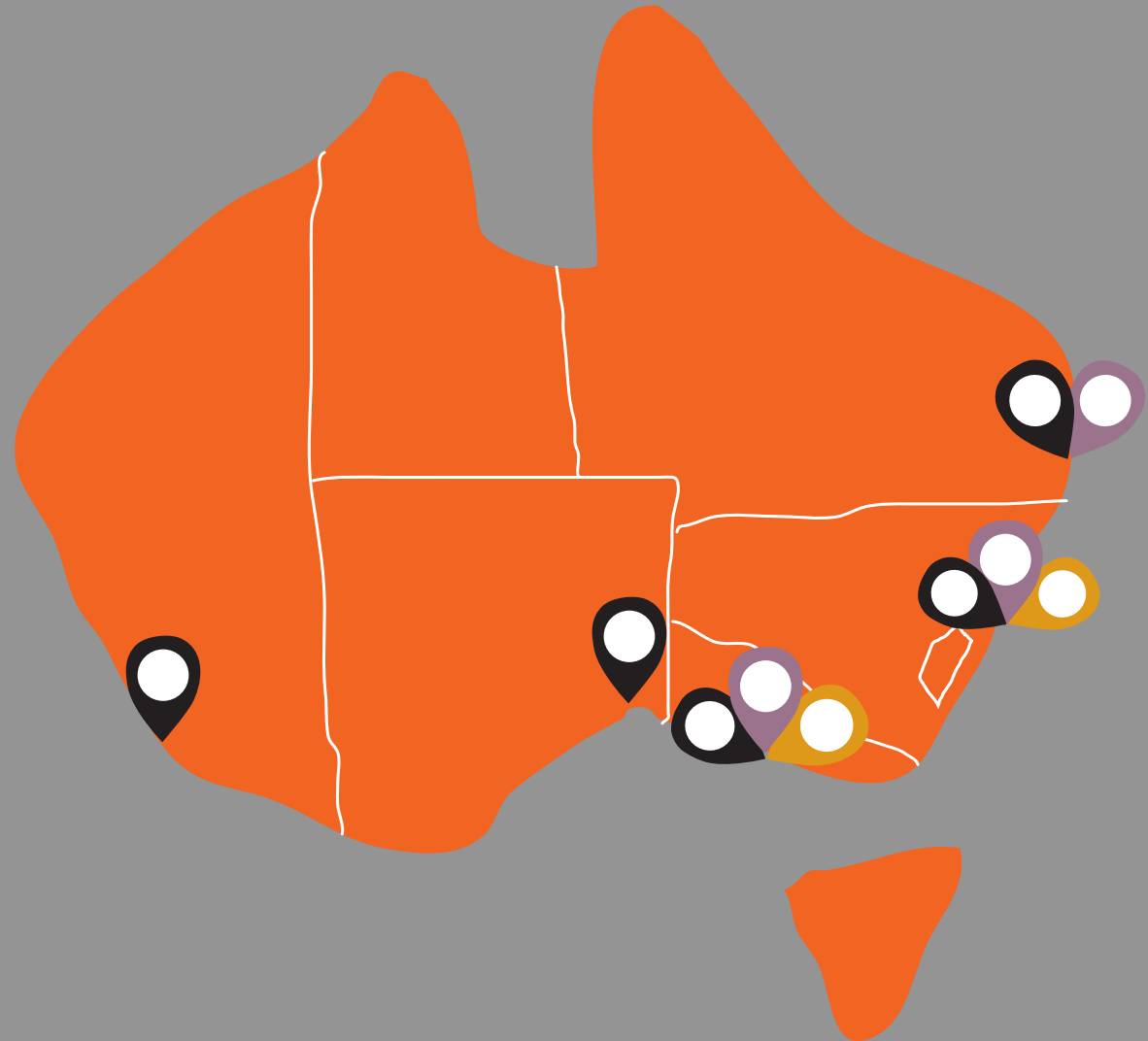
SBS Audience

# IMPACT MAP



Over the course of the campaign we had more than 30 screenings in community, professional and public sector settings including for our partners, government departments, NGO's, conferences, and Universities. Highlights include:

- CASA (Centre Against Sexual Assault) and GV Health – screened the film at Uni of Melbourne as part of fundraiser for Voice 4 Kids Act for Kids screened the film in Melbourne and Adelaide with guests from police, corrections, councillors and child protection departments
- Screened at the Australian Psychology Society annual conference in association with Blue Knot Foundation and shared to their 7,000 delegates in the newsletter
- NSW Department of Justice Victim Services – screened to executive team and was then used in training for over 200 Victim Services staff over 2 days with Q&A sessions after each screening
- Partnered with Knowmore legal firm to show the film and have discussions about the Royal Commission redress scheme in Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney
- Screened at SA Victim Services annual conference and Impact Producer spoke on a panel to over 500 delegates
- Ghosthunter panel at Community & Justice NSW's annual "Belonging" Conference, shown to a group of 300+ practitioners



Legend:



Theatrical



Community



Educational

# RECEPTION

## Critic reviews

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**“4.5 stars... simply remarkable... a breathtaking achievement.”**

**– PAUL BYRNES, SYDNEY MORNING HERALD**



**“4.5 stars...The most moving and unexpected journey.”**

**– MARGARET POMERANZ, FOXTEL ARTS**



**“One of the best films of the year.”**

**– MOVIES, MOVIES, MOVIES, FBI RADIO**

**“Moving, confounding, unsettling and subtly affecting”**

**– THE HERALD SUN**

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Links:



# TIMELINE



After premiering at the Sydney Film Festival followed by screenings at other festivals, the film had a short cinema release in September, and then broadcast on SBS Television. The film screened at many organisations and conferences including the Australian Psychology Society and FACS. In year 2 we released our educational screening guide and professional development modules and a 4hr podcast on Audible. In year 3 we released the Impact Evaluation Tool produced by La Trobe University and the pilot program and promo for Blue Knot's Friends & Family workshops.

## June - Aug 2018

International Premiere at Sheffield Doc Fest and Australian Premiere at Sydney Film Festival, followed by a screening at the Melbourne International Film Festival

## Aug 2018

After a series of screenings, the film released in cinemas in Sydney and Melbourne garnering fantastic reviews and audience feedback

## 2018-2020

Screened at various international and Australian film festivals plus 30 non-theatrical screenings around Australia at partner organisation, universities and at annual conferences

## Sep - Dec 2019

Broadcast on SBS and then available on SBS OnDemand, followed by DocPlay, Kanopy and other digital platforms

## 2020

Release of the guide and Professional Development Modules and promotion to organisation. Development of Impact tool by La Trobe

## 2021

Pilot of Blue Knot friends and family workshop and creation of their fundraising and promotional video. Release of the Impact Measurement tool

Additional details:

# RECEPTION Festival+Awards



AACTA Award  
WINNER



DOCS[MX]  
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2018



Melbourne International Film  
Festival  
OFFICIAL SELECTION



Sheffield Doc Fest  
Illuminate Award NOMINEE



Austen Film Festival  
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2018



SITGES  
OFFICIAL SELECTION



Luxembourg City Film Festival  
OFFICIAL SELECTION



ROKUMENTTI Rock Film Festival  
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2018



# RESPONSE



**“A powerful, true story about determination and survival against the odds - and a reminder about why as a society we need to protect our most vulnerable citizens - our children. Well done to all involved in the making of this film and to Jason, Cathy and others for their courage to tell their story.”**

**MIFF Audience on Facebook**

**Ghosthunter is a rare and honest depiction of the complexities of the struggle so many Australians experience in their recovery from different traumas in their childhood.**

**Dr Cathy Kezelman, Blue Knot Foundation**

**“Now we have GHOSTHUNTER, an authentic portrait of the complexity and impact of childhood trauma, abuse, and neglect.”**

**- Dr Michelle Noon, Clinical Psychologist**

**GHOSTHUNTER**

**“I just want to thank everyone involved in making this documentary...Jason u inspire me so much... I am no longer a victim...I stand proud as a survivor along with the other survivors from this powerful documentary... Thank u to the producers for making this possible”**

**Lisa Chalmers, SBS Audience Member**

# RECEPTION



**Debsta Pascoe Ghosthunter** Firstly I would like to say thank you for sharing such a personal and emotional part of your lives My heart goes out to all involved in this tragic moment As we enter this world we expect our parents to love and protect us and shield us from pain. Not emotionally ruin us It breaks my heart as a person and a parent to see this happen in our world . Words can not express the heartache and the everyday struggles you have all faced over the years . Stay strong and be proud of who you have become today. Don't let the demon that tried to destroy you take what's left of yourself worth

Ghosthunter Retweeted



**Barbara Hastings @barbhastings2** · 10 Sep 2018  
Thank you again @GhosthunterDoc for the tickets to #GhosthunterMovie last night! Incredible portrait of childhood trauma and C-PTSD, a condition I am all too familiar with. Beautifully filmed & edited! Thank you @Madman Go see this film, Tweeps!



**Michelle Robinson** recommends Ghosthunter.  
December 8, 2018

I had read about this documentary in the news. How incredible that what started off as a simple documentary about a man who does ghost hunting as a hobby ends up being a documentary about hunting for the 'ghosts' in this man's own personal history. The personal nature of this film makes you empathise as Jason uncovers the unravelling twists and turns. Job well done.

You Retweeted



**fitz @zechy** · Aug 9  
@GhosthunterDoc at @MIFFofficial last night reminded me why a great documentary can beat any other genre: nobody is more interesting than real people. What a heartbreaking story. #MIFF2018

Ghosthunter Retweeted



**Sally Treeby @SallyTreeby** · 17 Jun 2018  
Congratulations to #Ghosthunter team on the @DocumentaryAust award at @sydfilmfest - a compassionate portrayal of a deeply important topic. @GhosthunterDoc

Ghosthunter Retweeted



**The Terrible Aussie @BedeJermyn** · 7 Aug 2018  
GHOSTHUNTER: An incredibly powerful, riveting, unpredictable and haunting (no pun intended) documentary on one man's exploration into the mysterious events of his childhood and how those traumatic experiences shaped him today as a man. This is an absolute must see - 5/5 #MIFF2018

# IMPACT STRATEGY



## Mission

**Raise awareness and generate support for Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma**

## Goal

**Help ensure that all Australians are trauma-informed, be they professionals working with survivors, government and corporate leaders, or the general public**



Links:

## Impact goals

**01**

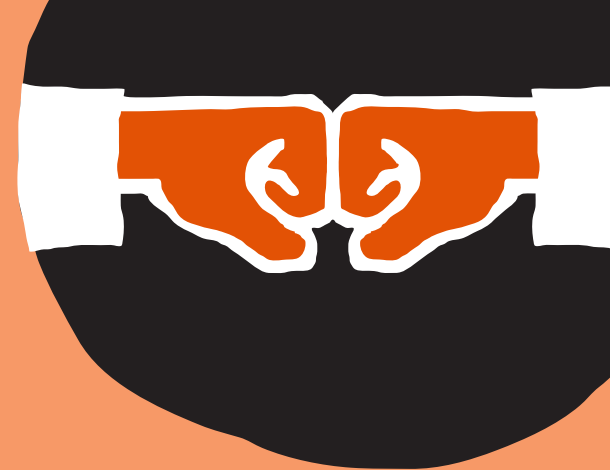
**Create awareness of the magnitude and impact of the problem - Physically, emotionally, economically and foster empathy**

**02**

**Build capacity and provide training for those who support adult survivors including professionals, services, friends, family and colleagues**

**03**

**Support partners by using the film for fundraising and lobbying for increased funding , better policy and equal access for survivors**



# FILM USE



“

The highlight of the campaign has been seeing how the film brings different parts of the sector together. We recently showed our training module videos to an advisory board that included a Mens Behaviour Change program leader, Sexual Assault social worker, UNSW Psychology professor and NSWFACS program director. All of them said that the film is a powerful tool and they will use the clips in providing Trauma Informed Training to their staff, to better support adult survivors.

”

Impact Producer, Jackie Turnure

Links:



DOCUMENTARY AUSTRALIA



# OUTCOMES



# Educational Guide

Ghosthunter's free to download screening guide is an educational companion piece to the documentary. This resource is tailored for educators teaching psychology, social work, justice, forensic sciences, law, and film studies, and includes curriculum links, key scenes and activities.

The CALD and ATSI reviewed guide was written by Clinical Psychologist and RMIT professor, Dr. Michelle S. Noon in conjunction with Blue Knot Foundation and is accompanied by six fact sheets.

The screening guide contains four teaching modules:

Module 1: Memory and Trauma

Module 2: Identity

Module 3: Belonging

Module 4: Resolution and Healing



Links:



Theatrical



Community



Educational

It's real life. It's what we're learning in our course – trauma, attachment, resilience – we're seeing these highlighted in the documentary. Student,

- Student, La Trobe University

13

Universities

301

Downloads

Both the film and the Educational Screening Guide are available via the online film portals Kanopy and Beamafilm.

# Professional Development Modules

Written by social worker/facilitator, Julie Blyth and reviewed by a group of advisors including UNSW and NSWFACs, these 3 training modules are designed to be used in group teaching and training in educational and vocational settings and can work separately or together. Partnering with ECAV to distribute them, they are tools to better inform and equip workers, services, and the wider community to understand and respond to complex issues stemming from childhood abuse, neglect and its long term effects. Each video clip is drawn from the film rushes and comes with a facilitator's guide with discussion topics and questions.

## Aims:

- To promote greater understanding of childhood abuse and neglect and its impact across the lifespan
- To provide a training tool for counsellors, police, child protection workers and other professionals in responding to victim/ survivors of child abuse and neglect
- To understand what assists victim/ survivors in healing and recovery

“Teaching staff have been raving to other colleagues about the quality of the resource. I am now developing curricula to use the resources in the Masters Counselling Social Work.”

Maureen Macginley, Lecturer, UNSW Social Worker

## SEARCHING FOR HOME

Insights into Childhood Abuse, Neglect & Resilience  
(19 mins)

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## NO LONGER A GHOST

Cathy's Journey of Healing from Child Sexual Assault  
(19 mins)

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

## WHO IS THE REAL JASON KING?

Invitation to Understanding, Responsibility and Change  
(23 mins)

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

30

Downloads

# Community capacity building

Because childhood trauma happened within relationships, healing also happens within relationships. However, supporting an adult survivor who is experiencing the impacts of childhood trauma can be confronting, confusing and exhausting. Often family and friends feel as isolated as survivors themselves and need help and support and that support is an under recognised and under resourced area.

Blue Knot Foundation is a leader in trauma-informed practice and training. They deliver an extensive professional development training nationally as well as educational workshops for survivors. However, they have not had the resources to deliver workshops for family and friends for many years and identified this is an area of significant need.

Our impact campaign supported Blue Knot to review and redevelop its educational workshop for family, friends and partners for a maximum of 30 attendees and deliver a pilot in 3 different geographical locations around the country with a mix of urban and regional areas, across states and territories.

Blue Knot incorporated relevant clips from the film into the workshops. We interviewed participants and created a promotional video for Blue Knot to fundraise ongoing Family and Friends workshop program and attract participants.

**“At the end of the workshop there were tears. But they were happy tears because there's that feeling that we've finally found something”**

**- Participant**



**With 1 in 4 Australian adults experiencing the impacts of childhood trauma, friends and family are often looking for information and support.**



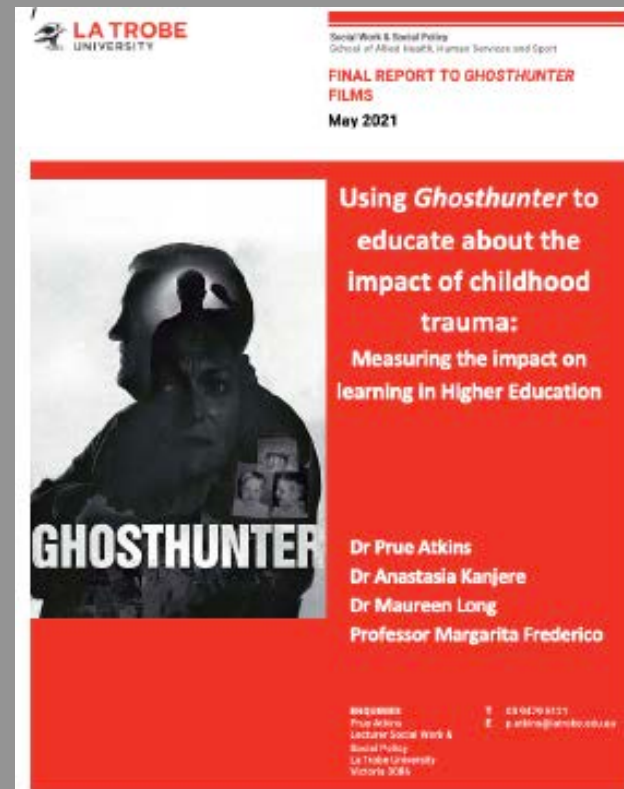
# Student learning

Childhood experiences of violence and abuse have lifelong impacts. Those who work to support, heal and advocate alongside children and adults experiencing trauma must have the values, knowledge and skills to be effective. We commissioned La Trobe University to create an impact measurement tool for identifying the learning from student viewing of Ghosthunter. The tool was developed within social work education (Bachelor, Honours and Masters qualifying AASW accredited courses) but aims to have applicability across higher education settings where education about the nature and impact of childhood abuse and complex trauma is an integral part of the curriculum (e.g. justice, primary and public health, mental health, psychology, education).

This project was conducted during 2020 and 2021 at La Trobe University's metropolitan and regional campuses with current social work students as the research participants. The development of the tool is underpinned by evidence-based knowledge of higher education learning processes, including transformative learning, critical reflection and wholistic competence. The tool is informed by a contemporary understanding of the nature of trauma and resilience.

The project demonstrated the effectiveness of Ghosthunter as a resource for building knowledge of trauma and resilience and of influencing attitudes and beliefs around its manifestation and impact on individuals. Its power as a transformative learning experience is as a narrative that has context and realism.

The impact tool is an easily implemented (via pre and post surveying) method for identifying the impact on a Ghosthunter viewing audience on their knowledge and attitudes about trauma and resilience. It can be used with individuals with lived experience of trauma as well as those who have no experience of childhood trauma and abuse or related experiences of abuse as an adult.



**“31% of participants showed marked differences in understanding of childhood trauma and abuse after watching the documentary, and importantly, demonstrated more accurate knowledge.”**

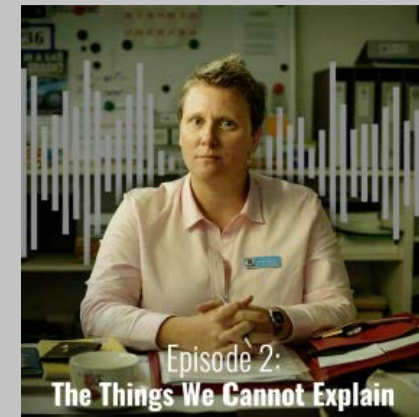
# Creating Awareness

With support from the Impact Campaign we developed a 4 hr adaptation of the documentary to present to Audible who then commissioned the podcast and released it worldwide. The podcast allowed us to tell more of Cathy's story with an entire chapter dedicated to her and Detective Ellen Quinn, emphasising the importance of positive police/victim relationships and need for support for survivors. Our impact partners and allies helped us promote the podcast, and used it in their work, further broadening our audience and helping to create awareness and empathy for adult survivors of childhood trauma.

“This true crime podcast took me on an emotional journey from laughter to tears, anger to compassion. Ghosthunter shows us the incredible resilience of the human spirit It's a captivating complicated journey leaving you wanting more.



- Audible Listener

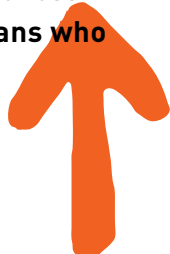


Links:

# Wrap Up

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Ghosthunter shines a light on the impact and often ongoing complex issues associated with childhood trauma but also depicts Jason's and Cathy's journey to recovery and healing, and highlights the resilience and resourcefulness of survivors. As we discovered working with key partners like Blue Knot Foundation, SAMSN, FACS and ECAV, the film and the impact materials proved to be powerful and much needed case studies for professionals who are providing trauma-informed training. The film and podcast were also a fantastic tool for University educators including UNSW, Uni of Wollongong, Australian Catholic University and LaTrobe University, and helped raised public awareness of the experience of 1 in 4 fellow Australians who have experienced childhood trauma



## LISTEN TO THE SECTOR

Initially we had envisaged using the film to encourage survivors to disclose but after consulting with our partners and allies working in the sector realised that the film is more useful in trauma informed training. Survivors present to many different services, be it housing, health, social services or their local GP and more needs to be understand about the impact of childhood trauma. As a longitudinal case study the film is a useful tool.

## CAPACITY IS KEY

With 1 in 4 Australians impacted by childhood trauma, services are overwhelmed and many people are not getting the support they need both for disclosure and ongoing care. Working with Blue Knot we recognised that building capacity in the community beyond professionals is key, and friends and family are often overlooked and under resourced when it comes to information and training. We need to help the helpers.

## NOT ONE SIZE FITS ALL

A key learning for us was realising that with so many different services and professionals supporting adult survivors, we couldn't make training or educational materials that would work for everyone. After considerable consultation and feedback on our materials we reworked them so that were more open ended and modular so that our partners and others could customise them easily for their own particular lens and uses.

## THE POWER OF THE POSITIVE

Recovery and resilience is key, we need to celebrate overcoming adversity and this proved to be the most effective part of our campaign for educators and professionals but also for survivors themselves. Shared experiences, seeing others recover and thrive, having a voice and being heard empower survivors and their friends and family, and the professionals who are supporting them.

# FILM TEAM



## PRODUCTION TEAM



### Writer/Director

Ben Lawrence



### Producer

Rebecca Bennett



### CO-PRODUCER

Paula Jensen



### EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Margie Bryant

## IMPACT TEAM



### IMPACT PRODUCER

Jackie Turnure



### IMPACT PRODUCER

Annie Parnell



### IMPACT COORDINATOR

Abby Cummins



### IMPACT COORDINATOR

Debbie Zhou

## INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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Sally White OAM  
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